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Mr & Mrs C. R. Lowell.
per S. R. R.

OUR SACRIFICES.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE WEST CHURCH,

NOVEMBER 3, 1861,

BEING THE SUNDAY AFTER THE FUNERAL OF
LIEUT. WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM.

BY C. A. BARTOL.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1861.



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S E R M O N .

“THE BEAUTY OF ISRAEL IS SLAIN UPON THY HIGH PLACES.”—
2 Samuel i. 19.

WHAT *a dreadful sacrifice*, I have repeatedly heard it said, and you have repeatedly heard it said, if you have not repeatedly said it yourselves, as tidings of one after another fresh calamity from the theatre of the nation's struggle smite on our ears. But no sacrifice stands alone, begins and ends in itself, or is ever to be regarded as so much blank loss. Let us not overlook the use of sacrifice. It is the law of our life, that all earthly progress in every good cause starts in sacrifice, lives on sacrifice, and without ever-new sacrifice would faint and die.

It was a great sacrifice, and David so esteemed it, when Saul and his son Jonathan, and two other sons besides, lay dead on the field under the arrows of the Philistine archers, who took great spoil of the Israelites' wealth also and their weapons of war. David writes a dirge on the occasion, perhaps the earliest from his sublime pen; and, if so, then the tender muse of his sacred poems truly was born

in sorrow and baptized in tears, as the very child of sacrifice. Yet, sad as the occasion was, it was not wholly lamentable. The death of Saul from the dart and the sword, and the fall on the field of Jonathan, whom David loved as he probably never loved man or woman else, with the knitting to him of his very soul, were not sacrifices absolute. Great use was there in the seeming waste of that royal and princely blood. The Philistines with their savage barbarous host were not helped on to victory by the slaughter that exacted those precious lives. Their stroke recoiled. The blood of Saul and Jonathan, that ran out of their veins, apparently to stop still and clotted as a pool on the earth, ran back somehow and was re-infused into the people. It made the blood of the whole kingdom tingle with unprecedented life and zeal. The damp sprinkling at the mouth of the furnace kindles the fire it but superficially quenches to a hotter glow; and no vital current that still flowed was so mighty for the triumph of the Israelites as that which was spent and spilt like water on the ground. David, warrior and king as well as psalmist, was kinged indeed, as he was crowned in form, by the martyrdom he mourned; the wild tribes of Amalek, the freebooters and enslavers of their day, were scattered before his sceptre and spear;—and, had there been no other fruit from the gore that enriched the ground of Gilboa, the ode itself that has come down to us with immortal inspiration, a song and a picture too, were

worth, in its stirring influence as a grand celebration of friendship and honor, the lives of a thousand men. Though David curses the mountains to have no rain or dew, food for all time has been gathered from their growth out of death.

We have had ages of success in this country; now has come our age of sacrifice. Manhood as noble and leadership as brave as Saul's, youth as lovely and winning as Jonathan's, have been immolated to that spirit of war which so pervades the race of man, like the air overhangs land and sea, and rages as fiercely now in our American borders as once on the Hebrew shores. But is it a bad age, undesirable to live in, because it is an age of sacrifice? No,—every sacrifice for a worthy object is really in the soul no sacrifice at all. We never made or can make a bare sacrifice for truth and justice, our country and God. The blessed use overpays all our surrender. When, in any affair, we get more than we give up, are we not to be content with the dealing? "*These are our sacrifices,*" said one man to another on leaving this church last Monday. "*And our glories too,*" was the reply. Fidelity to our convictions and living as we believe, at whatever cost of substance or existence, are the only glories we are equal to;—and he is but a craven who weighs comfort or fortune or peace for a moment in the scale with honor and duty and the public weal. What is your or my flesh and blood in comparison with loyalty to our principles? Verily, it is to be ac-

counted but as so much dirt and stones in the streets, or a little dust in the vast sweeping of the floor of mortality into the grave. If it be wanted for any worthy service, let us say, *Here it is!*

Much has been said of the sacrifice of property, which might all have been spared had we interposed no obstacle to this Southern rebellion, had we smothered our resentment at the insult to our flag, and let the insurgents with their institutions have their own way. But in what a torrent to repel them we drain our funds! Foreign writers, especially in England, have sent over sardonic speculations and queries how we, with our government and banks, shall solve the financial problem looming through the clouds of battle in our lowering political sky. In the American land and American soul Providence will find or put value enough to solve it. Europe may dismiss both her honest over-solicitude for our welfare, and any premature exulting at our downfall, disbeliever however she may be in our democracy, forgetting her own revolutions and consuming wars. There has been some destruction of property of which, only as a melancholy abomination we can think. But it has been not at our own, but the anarchists' hands, that railways and bridges are wantonly destroyed and coast-lights put out. Nearly all at least of our sacrifices of property, the fruit of industry, have been in the legitimate furtherance of our righteous aims. Yet an enormous sacrifice we must own it to be. The mustering and accou-

such ransom of the land shall be deemed too high? Truly, it shall not be reckoned with silver or much fine gold. With it, as with wisdom, not even rubies shall be compared. If freedom be the purchase, the money it comes to shall be a very little thing, though the purse of Cræsus were emptied.

But we have only begun to tell the story of sacrifice when we speak of property alone. We might be better off, reduced to Spartan simplicity, by losing half of that. I think many of us would be. We are making a great sacrifice, however, of happiness too. The weeping of young and elder women, which you and I have noticed in the doorways, as the successive regiments formed and passed along, shows but a few drops of the flood of grief within. The heart-throb as you part from, perhaps never to see again, that which is dear to you as the apple of your eye, is not light, though it makes no noise, like the pulsing drum and trumpet, in the air. The anxiety of wives and mothers, lovers and friends, respecting the absent, however meekly borne as from the will of God, wears on the springs of life. The report of a fatal result to some object of affection rends the heart-strings in which his form was enwoven. When tidings of wounds or death have reached one dwelling, the doubt pervading the entire community whither now the angel of death will fly, and on what threshold next the waiting inmates may see the crimson stain, weighs as a burden which only the grace of Heaven can help to bear. The whole Christian feeling of the people too is troubled and torn.

at the horrid spectacle of war between fellow-men, fellow-citizens, nay, offspring sometimes of the same ancestry, begotten and born of one parentage, perhaps rocked in the cradle together and consecrated from the womb to brotherly love, now arrayed on opposite sides, and seeking to pierce each other's breasts.

But the sacrifice even of happiness in all this affectional and moral pain we must make cheerfully. Do you say it is an excessive sacrifice? Whether it is excessive depends on what it is made for; and I plead, there is for it reason enough, and a fully atoning object. It is no more than belongs to our actual cause. Jesus Christ did not hesitate to promulgate his religion, though he foresaw it would divide families and make a man's foes to be those of his own household, and put a sword into numberless hands; for, spite of all such mischief and misery, he knew how preponderant to the world would be the benefits of his Gospel. We must not draw back from our dread crisis and ordeal of fire; for it is the only mode that appears of maintaining our fathers' enterprise of a free and Christian community on these Western shores. What other practicable method there is will you tell me? I see none. As the bitter sacrifices multiply and grow severe, some are tempted to ask if we have not in all this business made some horrid mistake. They shrink from further waging the terrible strife, and are almost ready for any mean compromise. But the sufferers, from whom the sacrifices have

been or may be taken, do not shrink. They have counted the cost. They, like Jesus, have had their agony beforehand. It has been in the garden more than on the cross. Therefore they, like him, endure the cross so meekly, with a serene beauty of behavior by which some, who think only of their affliction, are amazed. They conclude their offering to country, to liberty and God, when they send their sons and brothers to the war.

Besides, in this matter of sacrifice, let us remember, sacrifice in some shape we cannot avoid. It is for us, as for the Hebrews, standing among their flocks, to determine what particular sacrifice we will choose. Sacrifice, greater or less, we must make. We have but an alternative. Should we withhold our present sacrifice, what must be the substitute? Our whole political system broken up! The banner of the United States, — God bless it! — not only fired at on one fort or lowered from a single staff, but everywhere displaced, banished, and destroyed! The seat of government taken, and the federal authorities, by the vote of the whole people fairly chosen, disgraced and dispersed! An end to that dream of liberty for which our sires crossed the sea, and were willing to cross the other narrower but more fearful sea of death, as so many of them did. A worse despotism than they fled from, a slavery they would have shuddered to foresee, and as they look down from heaven must deplore, spreading without check through our territories, prescribing as a sovereign

our legislative policy, winning or forcing the magnificent stretch of our soil to itself; or, if the stubborn old Puritan stock should still revolt and hold out against its insolent sway, leaving this little corner of New England out in the cold here to shift for itself and be subject to all the ignominious dictations of a neighboring despotic realm. Will you make *such* a sacrifice, instead of the sacrifice you have already brought? One or the other you must elect. Which, brethren and sisters, shall it be? How should we like sacrifice coming in this style, of the kicks and buffets of one domineering empire or of a row of arrogant rival States? Would not all this other sacrifice be the greatest and worst? For one, I must say it is no point of wavering with me. By no reverses is my judgment changed. The will of God, which is equity, is not changed. Your resolve, which is patriotism, is not changed. No,—rather than fail to vindicate the proper institutions of the land, let us rise, and let us fall, to the last man! Let us not be nice in our preference as to the blow that shall smite us or the ditch into which we shall be thrown. Let us pick out a big burial-place for what may remain of us or ours; or, should we survive our country and American liberty, let us emigrate to some other clime, till it please God to take us to the franchise of heaven.

But we have not come to despair of the republic. We do not expect its foes to conquer. It is not unlikely their strength, kept up with valor so

fierce and grim in a bad enterprise, when it yields, may suddenly give way, with awful and utter collapse. But only by the virtue of our unfaltering resolve pressing hard upon it. There is nothing for us, then, but to stick to that side of sacrifice we have espoused already, and turn it from the horn of a dilemma into a horn like David's, exalted with honor. We must gain the victory. To gain it in battle, we must gain it in our hearts; we must gain it in our households, we must gain it at home. But one end of our army in fact is in the field. The other end is here. It is composed, not of men, but women. Tender maidens and venerable matrons are in it, instead of soldierly veterans and valiant youth. The unsheathed needle is all their armory, instead of cannon, musket, and sword. But it serves as well; nay, it is, in their hands, essentially strong to support cannon and musket and sword. If our case is won, to them as much as to the ranks in uniform will the credit be due; for, without woman's siding with him, in nothing can man succeed. Well is it recorded that woman was formed of man and brought to him. "The rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman." Were her encouragement withdrawn, I should be unnerved, if I could be by anything less than the abandonment of the Most High. It is glorious to see woman's rights by woman herself all absorbed now in woman's duty. Let man and woman together yield the sacrifice of this sad but necessary war. We thought in-

deed war for us was over. We heard it grumbling on in the distant corners of the earth ; but we fancied the monster, formerly ravaging here too, now a phantom for us, gone from our paradise too far to come back, as in a quiet night we see Mars and the Great Bear so cool and noiseless in the sky. Yet it revisits us in all its wrath. Let us deal with and carry it on in such a spirit and design as shall convert it from an enemy to a friend. Let us make it, not the ruiner, but regenerator of our land. Then all the sacrifices it exacts will be sanctified. God willing and his children faithful, they shall be sanctified. By the same blast which blows away the first froth of self-confidence from the surface, the deeper purpose is stirred. Our gloomy fear, too, as well as vanity, the wind shall scatter. As I looked at twilight lately from my window, I saw the evening star in splendor such as I never saw equalled before. Clouds had been on it ; mists had obscured its face. But they had passed with fugitive haste, nor robbed it of a single beam. Why with such especial brightness did it shine to the eye ? It shone so brightly because it had been dimmed ! So shall it be with this other planet, of light and freedom, our country in the West. Clouds may blot its lustre. They are over us now. But they will break, as, at this moment of my speaking, yonder storm breaks and lets into these windows a clearer ray. We may sacrifice our sunny happiness for a while. But not for outward happiness

were we made, but for inward blessedness, through self-denial at first, completed in ecstasy at last. If we can bless each other and society by coining our comfort and heart's blood into a self-sacrificing service, let us not hold back.

Familiar events prove that to property and happiness we must personally, like the Jews in old Canaan, for ourselves or those dearest to us, add the sacrifice of life. To one, among many such noble and widely commemorated sacrifices, I wish, in closing, to refer, not to gratify myself or any others peculiarly concerned, but, through the public attention, already fixed on it by circumstances of thrilling interest, for the benefit, as great as can be derived from any sermon, of delineating what I must consider a model of human worth. William Lowell Putnam, born July 9th, 1840, Lieutenant in a Massachusetts company, fell bravely fighting for his country, in the act probably of at once leading on his men and making a step to the relief of a wounded officer, in the battle of Ball's Bluff, October 21st, 1861, and he died, at the age of 21, the next day. The State that gave him birth, and to which he gave back honor, joined with his kindred and friends in celebrating his obsequies in this church, last Monday, October the 28th. The coffin lay on the same spot occupied, nine months ago, by that of Dr. Charles Lowell, his maternal grandfather. The corse of the soldier and hero, surmounted with the sword unwielded and motionless in its scabbard, was not unworthy to succeed here that of the

preacher and saint ; for spiritual weapons were no cleaner in the hands of the first than carnal ones in those of the last. Striking was the contrast made by the youth's silken locks and smooth, fair cheeks, cold in death, with the white hair on the furrowed brow that had also reposed at the shrine so long vocal with well-remembered tones of an eloquent and holy mouth. But there was more union than separation. The benignant resolution of the elder's expression was repeated in the sweet firmness of the young man's lips. They seemed as near together in spirit as circumstantially wide apart. The two venerable names of Lowell and of Putnam — the eminent jurist, as beloved as he was distinguished* — were well united in that of the youth ; for he justified every supposable law of hereditary descent by continuing in his temper and very look, with the minister's loving earnestness, the singular cordiality, the wondrous and spotless loving-kindness, which in his paternal grandfather's manner was ever like a warm beam of the sun. The delicacy due to the living allows me only to point to a picture such as is seldom exhibited, in

* Samuel Putnam was born 1768, and died 1853. At the bar he was particularly distinguished for his knowledge of Commercial Law, a chivalric sense of honor and duty, and uniform amenity of manners.

On the Bench of the Supreme Court, where he served for twenty-eight years, the exhibition of these powers of mind and elements of character gained for him universal affection and respect ; and his opinions in that branch of the law are esteemed among the most valuable contributions to jurisprudence to be found in the Reports of the State of Massachusetts.

his only surviving grandparent, of an intelligently contented, industriously cheerful, Christian old age,—still growing riper and fresher towards almost ninety years. A worthy grandchild William was. He bore out in action, in danger and death, every rising signal and promise of his brief but beautiful life. In the conflict, he cared more for others' peril than for his own. He sank, from all his forward motion, under one mortal wound. But, while he suffered, he smiled. He deprecated any assistance to himself as vain; he urged all to the work before them, and even forbade his soldiers to succor him. "Do not move me," he said to his friend; "it is your duty to leave me; help others; I am going to die, and would rather die on the field." With noble, yet well-deserved support, however, he was borne nearly a mile to the boat at the fatal river's brink by Henry Howard Sturgis of this city, who left him only to return to fight in his own place, and afterwards watched him like a mother in the hospital, hoping for his restoration. As he lay prostrate, knowing he could not recover, he beckoned to his friend to come to him, that he might praise the courage of his men in the encounter, rather than to say anything of himself. With such patient composure he endured his anguish and weakness, probably no mortal but himself could suspect how far he was gone. He sent home the simple message of love. Brightly, concealing his pangs, he wore away the weary hours. Cheerfully, on the Tuesday morning which was his last on earth, he spoke to his

faithful servant, George. He closed his eyes at length, and did not open them again, presenting, and perhaps knowing, no distinction between sleep and death. He "is not dead, but sleepeth," might it not have been said again? But, like the child raised by our Lord, he slept but a little. The greatness of his waking who shall tell?

I looked often and earnestly on that young man's face, in the house and by the wayside; and now that I can see it in the flesh no longer, it still hangs and shines conspicuous in the gallery of chosen portraits in my mind. I would fain put into some photograph of words what it expressed, and what the likeness fortunately taken of him largely preserves, respecting others' testimony while I render my tribute, and blending their views with my own; for I find in all estimates of him a notable uniformity. The first impression which any one beholding him would have received, was of a certain magnanimity. The countenance was open, and, as from an ample doorway, the generous disposition to meet you came out. There was a remarkable mixture of sweetness and independence in all his aspect and bearing. From his very gait and salutation you would perceive that his mind was made up, and he meant something by his glance or utterance; as one who knew him said, there was *character* in whatever he did. I am not sure a discernor of spirits might not have gathered, before he elected his part, from his effective carriage and fine physical development, signs of a military taste. Yet, if the

martial inclination were in him, it was combined with a strong aversion to take life or inflict distress. He proved once more, as it has been proved ten thousand times, that the brave is also the tender heart. But above all mortal considerations of pleasure or pain was his regard for justice and truth. He had a rare native rectitude. He never deviated from sincerity. If anything could grieve him, or, even in his childhood, move him for a moment from the admirable felicity of his temper, it would be any calling in question of his word. But the sensibility in him that felt all forgave all too; and without the sensibility that measures our forgiveness, our forgiveness is nothing worth. Beyond any passion, he evinced the reason in which his passion was held. Coolness in him covered enthusiasm; the gravity of deep though early experience repressed the sparkles of natural humor; a heart wistful of affection attended self-reliance; the modest and almost diffident was the courageous soul; by ready concession to another's correctness in any debate, he curbed a mounting will; and he suited the most explicit clearness of opinion to the perfect gentleman's ways. With his seriousness went along a keen sense of the ludicrous, by which almost every highly moral nature is quick to observe what is outwardly awry, as well as what is intrinsically wrong; but he was more apt, when he laughed, to laugh at himself than at other folks. He could contend also, but never from love of contention. He would fight only for a great object; he went to the

war in his country's emergency, at the outset proposing to go as a private; and he intended to return to the study and practice of the law if he survived. *If he survived*: but no sanguine thought of surviving did he entertain. He had no reserves; he was a devotee in arms. He offered himself as though less to slay than be slain were his end. No more of hero than martyr was in his mood, as in his doom. He threw his life in without scruple, with the ancient judging it sweet and decorous to die for one's country; and the parental presentiment, that die he would, was matched in the entire readiness for such an event with which the always fearless son, under no shadow of his own apprehension, marched on to the fatal fray. In every extremity he was self-possessed. If by one word I must mark the quality most prominent in his deportment, I should call it *balance*. Did this unqualified courage, in one extraordinarily conscious of existence, and with constitutional tenacity rooted in the present life, spring from the faith he so vividly had in immortality? and did that faith in turn spring from a profoundly religious trust in God? I believe it! I believe even the exuberant, vivacious, frolicsome boy had in him the germ, afterwards to open, of all this faith and trust. Impulsive, he did not act from impulse, but from that contemplation on the truth of the universe which told him on what impulse to proceed, and marked his way over the earth into the heavens.

Precious intellectual gifts, mostly philosophic,

though with no want of imagination, were in our brother, so that his friend abroad, Guépin, expected in him great scientific attainments, — while he spoke French, German, and Italian, in the style of the common people, whom he loved, as well as the dialect of the refined circles. He was fond of reading, but only of the best works in composition of any kind; and he left an exciting romance half finished, at the hint of something not wholesome or altogether lofty in the author's tone. His mind and heart were in unison, and on his young companions, as well as elders, he made the same stamp of a superiority permitting only one idea of him. It were hard to tell whether the reflective or executive faculties prevailed, so exact in his very nature was their poise. But the moral in him ever presided over the intellectual. Not for distinction, but duty, he lived, as he died. I know how the dead are eulogized, and what a eulogy I give; but out of the sincere thoughts of my heart I give it, — that those who knew him best, while they admired his talents, were never able to discover his faults.

Such is one of our sacrifices of life. A dawn predicting individual excellence through a long career, as plainly as the yet beardless Raphael's picture of the holy marriage was said to be prophetic of all his subsequent fame, has suddenly withdrawn its lustre from the earth. Is the sacrifice too great? I ask his kindred, is it too great? Would you have your boy back? Under the old

dispensation, when a sacrifice God would surely accept was to be made, a firstling of the flock, a lamb without spot or blemish, was singled out for the altar. A firstling of the flock, a lamb without spot or blemish, has been selected now. God himself, for this very purpose, as I think, of a measureless blessing to enliven the common heart, has chosen a victim from our beloved fold. No, we would not have him back. We would have him where he is! In the victim may we see the victory too. In the follower, as in the master, may the twofold lesson of triumph with sacrifice be seen. May the Divine wisdom, that loses life more certainly to save it, and gives up to gain all, shown so well in a new example, have imitation everywhere and continuance without end. Be humbly proud, be sacredly envious of the dead in the pattern displayed; for imitation and continuance it has! The enlistment, at the public need, of educated young men is not damped, but inspirited, from a companion's or kinsman's expiring breath. That breath passeth far through the whole air, into their nostrils! "I must go," said one of them to his father, — "I feel like a poltroon here at home." "Go with my blessing," was the father's reply. As the father himself told me this yesterday, he could talk no farther, for tears, but turned away. May the spectacle, so frequent among us, the most beautiful spectacle now beneath the sun, of boyhood tearing itself from mothers' embraces and fathers' arms, and happy homes, and loving dissuaves, to

consecrate itself to country's good, prefigure another spectacle, of a country purged of its errors and renewing *its* youth. May Heaven bless to our redemption every vicarious sacrifice, of the wounded and still exposed, as well as the dead ; — and so may all loss and self-surrender be sanctified in a perpetual resurrection, from the Most High, on earth and in heaven, of “the beauty of Israel,” slain upon *our* high places, till the blood of the martyrs, which is the seed of the Church, shall be also the life of the state. Standing, for us and ours, “as on life's utmost verge,” at the edge of whatever may come to mortals, so to the Eternal we pray ; — and may the Eternal to what even on earth is immortal in us too, answer our prayer ! Then we shall not have sacrificed on his altar in vain. All our sacrifices will redound alike to his glory, our country's welfare, and our own final gladness and peace. It is no sacrifice of truth, justice, freedom, or any human right, that we make. Only lower and cheaper things we sacrifice to these principles which are the attributes of God. Fixed be our faith that something, not of the dust and not laid low on the field, something which the funeral procession cannot marshal, nor the mighty state precede, nor the whole earth, whose mouth opens for the dead, swallow up, has escaped alive above the bonds we yet wear, into the region where is liberty, unity, peace, and light, with no need of the sun, for the Lord God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.



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